IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the specification to include the corrections set forth in the Certificate of Correction, a copy of which is enclosed herewith, which are shown in red in the Substitute Specification, also included herewith.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 33, 48, 49 and 51 without prejudice.

Please amend the claims as follows.

32. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition comprising:

[a starch-bound cellular matrix comprising] a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% and fibers having a length greater than about 0.3 mm and an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the starch-based composition is in a shaped and solidified state, wherein the fibers are dispersed throughout the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix], wherein the starch-based composition has a wall thickness of up to about 10 cm and [bound cellular matrix] degrades [after prolonged exposure] when exposed to water; and

a [biodegradable] coating on at least a portion of the starch-based composition which inhibits degradation of the starch-based composition and which is at least one of an edible oil, a drying oil, melamine, a polyester resin, an epoxy resin, a terpene resin, polyvinyl chloride, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, a polyacrylate, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, methocel, polyethylene glycol, an acrylic, an acrylic copolymer, polyurethane, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, a starch, soybean protein, or a wax [bound cellular matrix].

34. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the coating is applied to the starch-based composition [bound cellular] as a liquid which subsequently hardens to form a liquid-tight barrier.

35. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the coating is applied to the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] as a laminating material.

36. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 35, wherein the laminating material is applied in the form of a substantially uniform film.

37. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 35, wherein the laminating material is applied in the form of a sheet.

38. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] includes an outer skin portion having a density and an interior foam portion having a density that is significantly lower than the density of the outer skin portion.

39. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers have [an aspect ratio greater than about 10:1 and] a length greater than [about] 1.5 mm.

40. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the fibers are included in an amount in a range from about 2% to about 80% by weight of the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix].

41. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] has a wall thickness in a range from about 0.5 mm to about 5 mm.

42. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] has a wall thickness in a range from about 1 mm to about 3 mm.

43. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] further includes an inorganic filler dispersed therein.

44. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 43, wherein the inorganic filler is included in an amount in a range from about 20% to about 90% by weight of the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix].

45. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] has a density in a range from about 0.05 g/cm^3 to about 1 g/cm^3.

46. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] has a density in a range from about 0.1 g/cm^3 to about 0.5 g/cm^3.

47. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based binder includes a native starch or starch derivative that has been gelatinized during molding.

50. (Amended) [An article of manufacture] A starch-based composition comprising:

[a starch-bound cellular matrix comprising] a starch-based binder in a concentration greater than about 20% and fibers having a length greater than about 0.3 mm and an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1, wherein the starch-based composition is in a shaped and solidified state, wherein the fibers are dispersed throughout the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix], wherein the starch-based composition [bound cellular matrix] includes an outer skin portion having a density and an interior foam portion having a density that is significantly lower than the density of the outer skin portion; and

a biodegradable coating on at least a portion of the starch-based composition which is at least one of a polyester resin, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, or polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer [bound cellular matrix].

Please add the following new claims.

52. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 32, wherein the starch-based composition is in the shape of a container selected from the group consisting of a bowl, plate, clam-shell, box, and cup.

53. A starch-based composition as defined in claim 50, wherein the starch-based composition is in the shape of a container selected from the group consisting of a bowl, plate, clam-shell, box, and cup.

54. A method of coating a solidified starch-based composition comprising:

providing a shaped and solidified starch-based composition having a wall thickness up to about 10 cm and that degrades when exposed to water, the starch-based composition including a starch-based binder and fibers having a length greater than about 0.3 mm and an aspect ratio of at least about 10:1; and

applying a laminate film coating to at least a portion of the starch-based composition.

55. A method of coating a solidified starch-based composition as defined in claim 54, wherein the laminate film coating comprising a biodegradable polymer selected from the group consisting of cellulosic ethers, cellulose acetate, starches, biodegradable polyamides, polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl acetate, polylactic acid, polyhydroxybutyrate-hydroxyvalerate copolymer, other biodegradable polyester resins, soybean protein, and mixtures thereof.